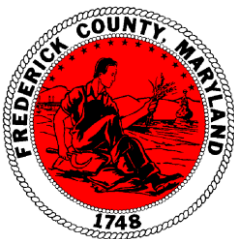


A Framework for Sustainability

Frederick County, Maryland



Leadership • Collaboration • Stewardship • Community



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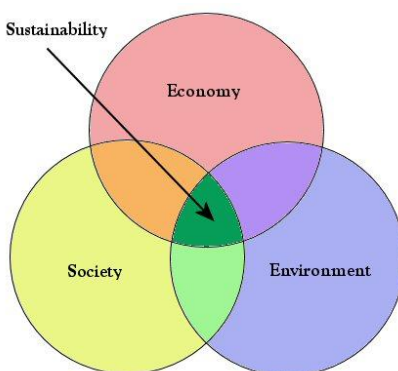
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Summary

Frederick County has a fundamental commitment to its constituents to make decisions that protect the economic, social, and environmental health – the sustainability – of the community. Making decisions and taking action that is sustainable recognizes the “big picture” and takes into account the impact on future generations as well as today’s pressing needs. Sustainability is a systematic, integrating principle that the Board of County Commissioners has endorsed to guide local decision-making. A sustainability framework requires that decisions are made that give equal consideration to the economy, society, and environment.



This Framework provides an initial, internal guide to the organization of the County’s sustainability program as we move ahead. It includes a vision for the sustainability program, discussion of BOCC guidance related to sustainability, focus areas for the program (practices, policies, and partnerships), an implementation plan to measure short-term progress, and a proposed timeline. The Framework proposes creation of a Sustainability Commission – to help the County achieve its vision through the contribution of diverse citizen stakeholders – as well as an internal Sustainable Action Team – that directly involves staff in sustainability and environmental initiatives relevant to operations and the workplace. In the following pages, each of these concepts is discussed in greater detail.

Establishing the Office of Environmental Sustainability (OES) in 2008 was a strong statement of the Board of County Commissioners’ (BOCC) commitment to sustainability and the environment. The office provides a valuable mechanism for coordinating the efforts of County divisions/departments and for providing consistent communication between the County and the community-at-large.

Building a sustainable future for Frederick County is not solely the work of government. There is a role for every member of the community, whether they are an individual, business, or organization, to engage in sustainability and stewardship efforts. As only one piece of the puzzle, the County cannot do it alone, but will provide leadership to the community as we move forward.

Given the economic, social, and environmental challenges we face as a nation, state and county, the time is now to embrace sustainability and respond with action at the local level. This Framework provides a mechanism for setting priorities, focusing resources, and determining the most appropriate and effective actions needed to achieve a sustainable future.

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Vision

Frederick County government is committed to lead by example, promote public participation, and engage in community partnerships that improve our quality of life and protect the natural systems that sustain life.

The guiding vision for Frederick County's sustainability framework is that:

- The County leads by example through its own sustainable **practices**,
- The County implements **policies** that encourage sustainable development within the community, and
- The County engages in **partnerships** that promote sustainable living.

Mission Statement - Office of Environmental Sustainability (OES)

Established by the Board of County Commissioners in 2008, the Office of Environmental Sustainability (OES) brings together community partners to build a sustainable future for the region. OES collaborates with County departments, businesses, citizens, and other organizations to advance improvements and innovation in:

- Air and Water Quality,
- Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy,
- Green Building and Smart Growth,
- Resource Conservation and Land Protection,
- Waste Reduction and Recycling,
- Sustainable Economic Development, and
- Citizen Participation and Community Engagement.

Guidance

This framework for sustainability is based on guidance provided by the Board of County Commissioners. In particular, the BOCC has offered policy direction in four areas:

1. The Countywide Comprehensive Plan, and associated Region Plans;
2. Various land use and conservation oriented ordinances;
3. Adopted resolutions relating to specific aspects of sustainability; and
4. The 2007-2011 Strategic Plan.

Countywide Comprehensive Plan

In January of 2008, the BOCC announced its [Growth Management Initiatives](#), which called for an update to the 1998 Countywide Comprehensive Plan. The Division of Planning was charged with revising the plan to address water resources and agricultural preservation requirements of recent state legislation. The Countywide Plan addresses many elements of sustainability such as transportation, land use, open space, natural resources, and energy. The [draft plan](#) is in progress and presents new topics such as community design, human services, economic development, and green infrastructure.

Ordinances

In addition to the County's Zoning Ordinance, other specific regulations such as the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, Forest Resources Ordinance, and Countywide Stream Buffer Ordinance incorporate sustainable development principles. An update to the [Zoning Ordinance](#) is in progress, which includes requirements pertaining to wind and solar arrays. The Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance is under review as part of the Growth Management Initiatives.

Resolutions

The BOCC has endorsed a number of [resolutions](#) that advance sustainability efforts in the County. Themes include reducing cumulative greenhouse gas emissions, reducing sprawl in the Resource Conservation Zoning District, and supporting affordable housing development.

BOCC Strategic Plan

When the BOCC took office, they prepared a [Strategic Plan](#) to guide their efforts over the next four years. There are a number of goals and objectives that are relevant to a broader sustainability vision for the county. In particular, the BOCC integrated a number of social equity considerations under Citizen Services, Leadership and Management, Open Government and Citizen Participation, and Technology and Communication. There are also a number of environmental objectives found under the Land Use and Infrastructure headings.

Focus Areas

This Framework offers a systematic approach for integrating sustainability into virtually all facets of the way Frederick County does business. Frederick County serves many roles in promoting sustainability throughout the community. Below are three focus areas where effort and actions should be concentrated.

1. Practices - Improve internal operations to achieve a sustainable organization and model sustainable practices.

2. Policies - Incorporate sustainability principles and goals into plans, regulations, policies, and funding decisions that impact the broader community.

3. Partnerships - Work with organizations, businesses, citizens and other community partners to address those issues that require community-wide action.

In the following pages, the overarching goals and policy guidance for each focus area are presented. As the sustainability program evolves, these sections will be revised and further defined by the BOCC, staff, and community partners actively engaged in our sustainability program.

Practices

The County has the opportunity to lead by example by implementing sustainable business practices in its internal operations. Sustainable business practices promote environmental and economic stewardship as well as communicate a message of effective, efficient governance to the public. County divisions have already made significant achievements in this area. Management Services convened the Energy Conservation Committee, introduced “Energy Dog”, installed water and energy saving devices in County buildings, made significant energy upgrades and renovations to buildings, and implemented the Fleet Fuel Conservation Program. Solid Waste brought single stream recycling to County facilities. HR presented a training session on energy conservation. DPW is working to obtain LEED green building certification for the Brunswick library construction.

All of these efforts contribute to an organizational culture that supports sustainability. Staff is focused on conservation and committed to saving resources. In the coming months, divisions will be asked to inventory their efforts and provide baseline information that will contribute to a Sustainability Action Plan for County Operations. New activities will be considered such as sustainable procurement of supplies, furniture, and equipment; further reductions in consumption and waste; minimizing the use of potentially toxic substances; and promoting employee education on sustainable practices.

A draft set of goals for the County’s sustainable business practices are listed below. These goals will be reviewed and confirmed by the internal Sustainable Action Team when they convene later this year. The County’s draft sustainable practices goals are to:

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- Reduce the environmental impacts of County operations,
- Improve the efficiency of County operations through reduced resource use,
- Pursue the objectives outlined in the 2007-2011 BOCC Strategic Plan, and
- Demonstrate environmental leadership.

The BOCC has provided staff with the following direction which will drive the goal setting and development of a Sustainability Action Plan for County Operations:

- Resolution 07-14: Endorsement of the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement (MCPA)
- BOCC Recycling and Waste Reduction Policy, 02/1995
- Strategic Plan Objectives
 - Adopt a comprehensive energy plan for Frederick County government, which establishes annual definitive goals to reduce the county's use of non-renewable energy over a 15-year period in its office buildings, facilities, and vehicle fleet by 50% or more.
 - Evaluate creative and evolving non-traditional employment structures, i.e., telecommuting, shared jobs, flexible time, etc., on an ongoing basis.

Policies

Sustainability principles and values have been present in County's plans and regulations for decades. A review of the [Countywide Comprehensive Plan](#) (1998), for example, highlights literally hundreds of policies and actions intended to promote a sustainable, livable community. This Framework supports continued and improved integration of sustainability in County plans, policies, regulations, and funding decisions that affect the broader community. Additionally, the Framework emphasizes the importance of aligning County policies and plans around a consistent guiding vision for sustainability that is communicated effectively to citizens, community partners, and staff.

In January of 2008, the BOCC put forth their Growth Management Initiatives (GMI), which directed a review and update of the Countywide Comprehensive Plan, Comprehensive Zoning Map, and Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance. Consequently, the County's Zoning Ordinance was also under review in a separate cycle, not connected with the GMI. The overlapping timelines of these updates provides a unique opportunity to align their focus, inject the County's sustainability vision, and ensure consistency as we move forward.

Goals for integrating sustainability into policy and providing consistency include:

- Instill a culture of sustainable long-range planning and forward-thinking policy development within local government,
- Provide a policy and regulatory framework that supports sustainability,
- Invest County resources in projects that promote sustainability,
- Implement policies in the Comprehensive Plan and revise the Comprehensive Plan as needed to reflect current understanding and needs regarding sustainability, and

- Ensure that the Zoning Ordinance and other County ordinances and regulations support development that is sustainable.

Some of the existing sustainability-related policy in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan is provided below as guidance:

- Comprehensive Plan Objectives
 - Maximize inter-jurisdictional cooperation and coordination in planning and managing growth and change in Frederick County, particularly with municipalities in planned growth areas.
 - Promote stewardship of the land as a universal ethic with community responsibility for its management.
 - Concentrate development in suitable areas to maximize the compatibility between manmade development and the natural environment.
 - Protect environmentally sensitive areas including, but not limited to, steep slopes, stream valley buffers, woodlands and forests, floodplains and wetlands, and habitats for threatened and endangered species.
 - Maintain the high quality of Frederick County's environment as a unique local and regional resource.
 - Preserve the County's best agricultural lands for continued and future production.
 - Integrate pedestrian and bikeway facilities into the County's existing communities and the design of new communities.
 - Encourage energy and water conservation and efficient use of energy and water resources.
 - Provide sustainable and harmonious living and working environments, with a full range of housing types, institutions, and workplaces in which all age and social groups are fully integrated and in which the bonds of authentic communities can be formed.
 - Promote safe, healthy, and clean communities as a necessity to ensuring a high quality of life for all County residents.
 - Promote economic vitality as a crucial element of the health of every community.
 - Make choices to accommodate economic development while preserving vital natural environmental systems.
 - Broaden the employment base in the County to minimize the need for citizens to commute to jobs outside the county.

Additionally, the following resolutions and ordinances provide policy guidance to the sustainability program:

- Resolution 07-38: Increase Minimum Lot Size in Resource Conservation Zoning District
- Resolution 08-01: Commence Growth Management Initiatives
- Resolution 08-22: Adoption of Comprehensive Plan for Thurmont Region
- Resolution 08-26: Adoption of Comprehensive Plan for New Market Region
- Ordinance 08-19-495: Zoning Text Amendment ZT-07-15 To Amend Section 1-19-302 Resource Conservation District of the Frederick County Zoning Ordinance

- Ordinance 08-21-497 To Amend the Frederick County Zoning Ordinance to Apply Waterbody Buffer Requirements Countywide
- Ordinance 08-22-498 Amendments to the Frederick County Forest Resource Ordinance

And finally, the BOCC's Strategic Plan guides sustainable policy development in these areas:

Citizen Services Goal

- Future region plans and comprehensive plans will include a human service component.

Land Use Goal

- Evaluate the incorporation of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards into the county's zoning ordinance.
- Evaluate and expand tools for achieving the established county goal of preserving 100,000 acres of farmland.
- Enhance protection of the environment by developing plans and, where appropriate, adopting ordinances to extend provisions of the county's Forest Resource Ordinance (FRO), to codify environment goals expressed in the comprehensive plan, and to implement green infrastructure.

Partnerships

As mentioned in the introduction, long-term sustainability in our community is not achievable without the investment and collaborative spirit of residents, businesses, schools, volunteer groups, non-profits, and government agencies. There are simply too many roles for one individual or organization to fill; a community-wide commitment is needed to make substantial contributions toward energy conservation and use of renewables; green building and smart growth; waste prevention and recycling; open space and land preservation; air and water quality; and sustainable economic development.

In order to engage the community and learn from the diversity of voices present in Frederick County, this Framework supports the BOCC's direction to establish a Sustainability Commission. This appointed commission will provide the BOCC with a community-based perspective on issues related to sustainability and guide the development of a Frederick County Sustainability Plan.

Generally, the goals for partnerships in sustainability include:

- Build meaningful partnerships that support a healthy environment, vibrant economy, and livable communities for all in Frederick County,
- Collaborate with community partners in sustainability and stewardship efforts,
- Provide education and outreach to the community that advances sustainability principles and builds a stewardship ethic, and
- Encourage community action in regard to sustainable living.

In addition to providing staff direction to begin development of the Sustainability Commission concept, the BOCC included broad-reaching goals for citizen participation and effective communication in their Strategic Plan. The following guidance for inclusiveness and openness, which will result in a more complete sustainability program for Frederick County, comes from the Open Government and Citizen Participation & Technology and Communication goals of their plan.

Goal: Frederick County has open, ethical, and transparent government and encourages citizen participation.

- Adopt a comprehensive marketing and public relations plan including the possibility of a weekly or monthly discussion show, infomercials on hot topics, and an annual “state of the county” report.
- Institute a coordinated constituent service system to assure timely response to questions, concerns, and complaints.

Goal: Frederick County responsibly manages and utilizes evolving information technologies to optimize services.

- Implement a public meeting information portal for video streaming and documentation of the county’s public meetings.
- Develop a multi-agency, citizen/business-focused initiative to support technology development, access, education, and job growth in Frederick County through public library, economic development, and other county agency resources.

Implementation Plan

The OES will communicate and collaborate regularly with the BOCC, staff, and general public to implement the sustainability program. Three efforts are proposed to achieve success within the three focus areas:

- Development of a Sustainable Action Team (Practices),
- Integration of Sustainability into the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance (Policies), and
- Establishment of the Sustainability Commission (Partnerships).

Implementing Practices, Policies, and Partnerships

Development of a Sustainable Action Team

To implement the goals of the *Practices* focus area, the Office of Environmental Sustainability (OES) will convene an internal “Sustainable Action Team” consisting of representatives from all affected Divisions/Departments. This team will be responsible for inventorying existing programs, reviewing internal operations, and developing measurable goals and actions to be integrated into day-to-day operations. The team will gather baseline data such as current energy and water use and recycling efforts and compile a Sustainability Report.

Integrate Sustainability into the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance

The *Policies* focus area will be guided initially by efforts underway in the Division of Planning. The Division is currently crafting an update to the Countywide Comprehensive Plan in response to the BOCC’s Growth Management Initiatives and recent state legislation. Planning has already expressed an interest in OES crafting a sustainability chapter for the plan. Sustainability and stewardship principles may be mandated as elements of the Plan if the Governor’s Smart, Green, and Growing-related legislation is adopted. As mentioned, Planning is also working on amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. Their current work program includes the addition of wind and solar arrays; other areas that they are investigating include incorporation of low impact development design and green building standards.

Establishment of a Sustainability Commission

The concept for a Sustainability Commission is in response to direction from the BOCC on August 5, 2008 and October 14, 2008 and meets the goals of the *Partnerships* focus area. This commission, referred to as the Sustainability Commission, will serve several functions. First, it will bring broad, high-level skill sets, expertise, and vision necessary to address the multiple dimensions of sustainability in a strategic manner on behalf of the county. The commission will represent key stakeholder groups that will contribute to the broad sustainability work that needs to be undertaken over the long-term and they will help the county set priorities for meeting its strategic goals going forward. The Commission will develop a Sustainability Plan to guide future decision making and action.

End Products

The County's successes in regard to its sustainability program will be measured by the accomplishment of action items proposed in the planning documents below. A document will be completed for each of the three focus areas (practices, policies, and partnerships). These three documents are intended to communicate and implement the sustainability vision outlined in this Framework.

1. Sustainable Action Plan for County Operations,
2. Sustainability chapter to the Countywide Comprehensive Plan, and
3. Sustainability Plan developed by the Frederick County Sustainability Commission.

Public Outreach and Education

To facilitate public education and involvement in the county's sustainability program, OES will produce two additional outreach items: (1) an Annual Sustainability Report and (2) the OES web site. The Report will highlight general successes in the sustainability program over the past year and will assess progress in the various focus areas. The website will offer broad information related to sustainability principles in order to communicate the County's efforts and educate the public in areas of sustainable living, environmental stewardship, and public involvement.

Evaluation and Improvement

OES will evaluate the success of the sustainability program and make adjustments when necessary. An update to this Framework will take place to inject new policy direction from the BOCC. The Sustainability Commission will determine a multi-year review period for the Sustainability Plan document and the County Sustainable Action Team will do the same for the Action Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is updated on a six year cycle.

Proposed Timeline

	Jan 2009	Feb 2009	Mar 2009	Apr 2009	May 2009	Jun 2009	Jul 2009	Aug 2009	Sept 2009	Oct 2009	Nov 2009	Dec 2009	Jan 2010
Practices													
Develop membership of the Sustainable Action Team													
Convene first meeting													
Develop function and responsibilities													
Inventory programs													
Policies													
Discuss Sustainability chapter with Planning													
Partnerships													
Present function and purpose of the commission to BOCC													
BOCC creates Sustainability Commission													
Advertise for membership to commission													
Review applications and make recommendations to the BOCC													
Convene the commission													
Prepare Sustainability Plan for BOCC review													2010
OES Website													
2009 Sustainability Report													